

What should I do when my child won't go to bed on time?

Make “bedtime” a special time for you and your child by reading a book, talking about their day and planning for tomorrow with them.

Establish a specific bedtime and make sure that the bedtime is consistent. Set up a “bedtime routine” and go through it with your child so they know what to expect. For example: 7:00 pm- watch TV or listen to music, 7:15 pm- take bath, brush teeth, dress for bed, 7:45 pm-story time, 8:00 pm- lights out.

Reward your child for going to bed on time by allowing their friends to come over, letting them watch a favorite TV show, or playing their favorite game with them. Verbal praise is also very important, so make comments like “I am so proud of you for getting to bed on time!”

Make certain that your child is aware of the consequences that will occur for not going to bed on time (e.g., loss of privileges). Write a contract with your child if needed, and only focus on one behavior in the contract. Here is an example: I, Samantha, will go to bed at 8:00 pm for five nights in a row. When I accomplish this, I can stay up late on Saturday night.

Avoid activities that may cause your child to be “wound up” before bedtime and encourage them to participate in quiet activities like reading before they go to sleep.